

Westminster SACRE Annual Report for the academic year September 2014- August 2015

Background to Westminster SACRE

In 1989 Westminster Council's Chief Education Officer, City Solicitor, and the Secretary of the City of Westminster together produced a background paper on the statutory requirement coming out of the 1988 Education Reform Act for all local authorities to set up and maintain a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). The paper outlined proposals for the setting up of a SACRE in Westminster. Following a meeting with interested parties in City Hall on 12 July 1989 the Chief Education Officer wrote a paper entitled "Constitution of SACRE" that he took to the "Education - Appointed Members Panel" where the proposals were agreed on 16 August 1989. This paper specified by name who would make up the new SACRE but as to other matters stated simply,

"The Education Reform Act does not lay down in any detail how SACRE should operate. In order to maximise cooperation, it is proposed that the group should evolve its own ways of working. ... The Education Reform Act does not prescribe how a Chairman should be chosen. It is proposed that Councillor Harvey should take the Chair on a temporary basis, until the members of the newly established SACRE get to know one another, when they will elect their own Chairman."

From its inception Westminster SACRE has been characterised by a cordial and cooperative atmosphere that has allowed meetings to proceed quite informally. When necessary SACRE has replaced members who left but the original membership structure has had only the most minimal alteration in that SACRE itself decided that the provision for two Muslim members should be understood as requiring both Sunni and Shia Islam to be represented. In 2002 SACRE decided that it should produce a more formal constitution, not because of any wish to change its way of working but because it was decided that it would be useful to maintain an accessible document that reminded SACRE members of the legal framework within which it worked and that could be consulted as to procedures or processes if any disagreement or uncertainty arose. That constitution is attached as appendix 1 of this report.

SACRE is responsible for advising the local authority on religious education and collective worship in community schools. Westminster local authority has in total eight community primary schools (and twenty-six voluntary aided (church) primary schools). There are now no community secondary schools. There is one voluntary aided secondary school (church school). There are two special schools in Westminster, both of which teach RE according to the agreed syllabus insofar as is practical. There are seventeen academies and free schools. There is no statutory requirement for SACRE to have knowledge of the religious education and collective worship offered by academies and free schools but SACRE communicates with all state schools in the local authority.

Whilst a relatively small authority, the City of Westminster is extraordinarily rich in religious communities, with several places of worship of national importance within its boundaries: these include: Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral, Methodist Central Hall, the Central London (Regent's Park) Mosque, and West London Synagogue. The City is also home to the Islamic Centre of England (a prominent Shi'a centre) and the Radha-Krishna Temple: the Bahá'í Faith has its national headquarters within the City.

In finding members willing to attend meetings Westminster SACRE has had to deal with the problem that many people who work in Westminster live elsewhere, this is particularly the case with many teachers who work in the City's schools. Consequently Westminster SACRE holds its meetings during the working day or as a twilight meeting, rather than in the evening. This, though, creates difficulties for those whose work commitments make attendance difficult.

For the religious communities, Westminster has more representatives than most SACREs drawn from those professionally involved in religious or belief organisations, and religious education - current members include education officers from the London Anglican Diocese, and national officers of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the British Humanist Association.

Meetings held in the reporting year

Westminster SACRE met on three occasions during this reporting year:

Meeting: 11th November 2014 at Westminster City Hall

There were in attendance at this meeting:

- two representatives of the Church of England,
- five representatives of the other religions & beliefs group,
- one teacher
- three councillors;
- in addition there were the clerk, a council support officer and an external consultant.

The following items were discussed:

- Links between academies and the work of SACRE
- Recent Freedom of Information Requests in relation to schools with determinations granted by SACRE
- An update on new non statutory curriculum guidance being produced by the RE Council of England and Wales
- An update on recent consultations about GCSE and A Level content for RE.

No advice was sought by or given to the Local Authority since the last meeting.

Meeting: 26th February 2015 at The London Diocesan Board for Schools

There were in attendance at this meeting:

- two representatives of the Church of England
- seven representatives of the other religions & beliefs group
- one teacher
- two councillors
- in addition there were the clerk, a council support officer and an external consultant
- Rudolph Eliot Lockhart, new Chief Executive of the RE Council of England and Wales was also in attendance.

The meeting began with a presentation from Rudolph (Rudi) Eliot Lockhart. He informed everyone that the RE Council has over sixty member organisations including faith, non faith and interfaith professional bodies. He explained that the Council works to:

- raise the standard of teaching and learning in RE
- secure high quality graduates as RE teachers
- support high quality continuing professional development for RE teachers throughout their careers
- ensure that RE is perceived as a high quality, rigorous subject
- raise the standard of RE literacy.

Members of SACRE considered a paper for schools produced by Roger Butler at their request. The paper explained the nature of Islamic diversity in general and in Westminster in particular. It was agreed that subject to some minor amendments this paper would be distributed to all schools. It would also be tabled at SACRE meetings in Hammersmith and Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea as part of the tri borough relationship. Roger Butler was commissioned to write similar papers about other faiths and belief systems.

There was discussion on national RE updates, including the role of an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on RE which has been taking forward work based on non statutory national guidance produced by the RE Council of England and Wales.

There was also some discussion about new GCSE specifications for RE. Members noted with regret that the campaign for non religious views to be included had been unsuccessful. Details of the new specifications can be found via the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-academically-rigorous-rs-gcse-backed-by-faith-groups> and in the document on RE GCSE subject content published in February 2015: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/403357/GCSE_RS_final_120215.pdf

No advice was sought by or given to the Local Authority since the last meeting.

Meeting: 2nd July 2015 at Robinsfield Infant School

There were in attendance at this meeting:

- two representatives of the Church of England
- six representatives of the other religions & beliefs group
- one teacher
- two councillors
- in addition there were the clerk, a council support officer and an external consultant.

Mark Chalmers, Tri-Borough Prevent Programme Manager provided an update on the work of Prevent. Prevent is a national strategy funded by the Home Office. It has three strategic objectives:

- to respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat faced from those who promote it
- to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support
- to work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that need to be addressed.

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act places a responsibility on public bodies to have due regard to Prevent. The Westminster Prevent team has developed a suite of Prevent free resources for both students and staff in order to assist schools in meeting the legal requirements arising under the Prevent duty and safeguarding. Schools can pick the resources and support that best suits their needs Mark responded to questions from SACRE members:

- The number of geographic areas identified as particularly vulnerable to extremism has risen from 20 to over 50. Westminster is in the top 10 of these.
- SACRE can support those maintained schools it is responsible for by ensuring they are aware of the Prevent strategy and the support currently on offer.

Members of SACRE considered papers for schools produced by Roger Butler at their request. The papers explained the nature of Christian and Jewish diversity in general and in Westminster in particular. It was agreed that amendments would be sent to the Clerk and the papers would be brought back to the next SACRE meeting.

Developments in national updates in RE were discussed. Particular attention was given to a recent paper produced by Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead called 'A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools' in which they propose significant changes in the current legal status of both RE and Collective Worship. A link to the document can be found here: <http://faithdebates.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/A-New-Settlement-for-Religion-and-Belief-in-schools.pdf>

New national guidance on the RE curriculum was noted. It can be accessed at: <http://www.reonline.org.uk/religious-education-in-the-new-curriculum/>

Members were reminded that the guidance is advisory only and is non statutory.

No advice was sought by or given to the Local Authority since the last meeting.

Membership of Westminster Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education during the school year 2014 - 2015

Group A - “ a group of persons to represent such Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area;” (Education Act 1996, 390 (4) (a))

Name	Representing	Comments
Krishan Manocha	Bahá'í Faith	Throughout reporting year
Amir De Martino	Shia Islam	Throughout reporting year
VACANCY	Sunni Islam	
Rajinder Singh Bhasin	Sikhism	Throughout reporting year
Peter Ward	Roman Catholic Church	Throughout reporting year
Andrew Copson	British Humanist Association	Chair of SACRE
Sophie Dunoff	Judaism	Throughout reporting year
David Quorroll	Society of Friends (Quakers)	Throughout reporting year
Julia Walker	Hinduism	Throughout reporting year
Val Reid	Methodist	Appointed January 2013
Hilary Sewell	Baptist	Appointed May 2013
David Nurse	Pentecostal	Throughout the year
VACANCY	Orthodox Churches	
Chueh yun Shih	Buddhism	
VACANCY	United Reform Church	

Group B - “ ..., a group of persons to represent the Church of England;” (Education Act 1996, 390 (4) (b))

Name	Representing	Comments
Elizabeth Wolverson	Church of England	Throughout reporting year
VACANCY	Church of England	Throughout reporting year
John Hicks	Church of England	Throughout reporting year
Emily Norman	Church of England	Appointed February 2013

Group C - “a group of persons to represent such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area;” (Education Act 1996, 390 (4) (c))

Name	Representing	Comments
Naomi Leaver	NAHT	Headteacher, Robinsfield
John James		RE Advanced Skills Teacher, Grey Coat Hospital (Secondary Academy)
David Whitley	NASUWT	Teacher, Quintin Kynaston School
Lyndsy Killip	NUT	Teacher, Essendine Primary School

Group D - “ a group of persons to represent the authority.” (Education Act 1996, 390 (4) (d))

Name	Representing	Comments
Cllr Peter Church	The Council	
Cllr Ruth Bush	The Council	
Cllr Antonia Cox	The Council	

Servicing Officers

Name	Representing	Comments
Lucy Nutt		Principal Lead Officer
Roger Butler		Professional Adviser to SACRE until November 2014
Lesley Prior		Professional Adviser to SACRE from November 2014
Amanda Price		Clerk to SACRE

Appendix 1 to SACRE Annual Report

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

CONSTITUTION

1. ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

- i) To advise the Local Authority (Westminster City Council) upon matters connected with religious worship in its schools.
- ii) To advise the Local Authority upon the religious education to be given in its schools in accordance with an agreed syllabus. In particular it can offer advice on methods of teaching, the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers.

For (i) and (ii) the Local Authority may refer matters to the SACRE, which SACRE must then consider and offer advice on them; but SACRE may also take the initiative in making recommendations to the Local Authority.

- iii) To determine and review the cases in which the requirement for collective worship that is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character is not to apply.
- iv) To decide whether the Local Authority's agreed syllabus should be reviewed (the Local Authority Committee of the SACRE cannot ask for such a revision or participate in a vote on the question).
- v) To write an annual report on its work which will:
 - (a) specify any matters in respect of which the SACRE has given advice to the Local Authority;
 - (b) broadly describe the nature of the advice given;
 - (c) where any such matter was not referred to the SACRE by the Local Authority, give the SACRE's reasons for offering advice on that matter.

Copies of the report must be made available to schools and the public by publishing it on the SACRE and/or other appropriate website

At the discretion of the Local Authority the SACRE may:

- monitor RE provision to inform their advice and reporting;
- monitor collective worship provision to inform their advice and reporting;
- be involved in the Complaints Procedure.

2. OFFICERS

- i) Westminster Local Authority shall appoint a suitable officer to be clerk to the SACRE.
- ii) Westminster Local Authority shall appoint officers to attend SACRE meetings to provide professional advice and support and to ensure there is effective communication between SACRE and the Local Authority.

3. MEMBERSHIP

In accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1996 (Section 390(4)):

- i) the SACRE is to comprise four groups representing respectively:
 - (a) such Christian denominations and other religions or beliefs and denominations of such religions or beliefs as, in the opinion of the Local Authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions or beliefs in the area;
 - (b) the Church of England;
 - (c) such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the Local Authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area;
 - (d) the Local Authority;
- ii) the Local Authority has to take all reasonable steps to assure itself that the persons appointed under (i) are representative of the denominations or associations in question; it must also attempt to ensure that the number of representative members appointed to any representative group under (i)(a) to represent each denomination or religion or belief required to be represented shall, so far as consistent with the efficient discharge of the group's functions, reflect broadly the proportionate strength of that denomination or religion or belief in the area.
- iii) the Local Authority may remove a member of the SACRE if in the opinion of the Local Authority that member ceases to be representative of the denomination or association which he/she was appointed to represent;
- iv) any member may resign at any time.

The composition of Westminster SACRE is attached as an appendix.

4. TERM OF OFFICE OF MEMBERS

The term of office for members shall be for the period between the first meeting of the Cabinet of the Council of the City of Westminster subsequent to a council election, and the corresponding meeting following the next election of the Council.

5. TERMINATION OF SACRE MEMBERSHIP BY REASON OF NON-ATTENDANCE

Where a nominated representative fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the SACRE and is not represented at any of these meetings by a named deputy, s/he shall cease to be a member of the SACRE and the nominating body shall be invited to nominate another representative. See also 3(iii) above.

6. VACANCIES

- i) A member appointed to fill a vacancy shall hold office only for the unexpired term of office of the member in whose place he/she is appointed.
- ii) Any vacancy occurring within three months of the expiration of the term of office of a member need not be filled.

7. DEPUTIES

- i) Each nominating body may nominate a deputy for each of its representatives to SACRE and such deputies, subject to their endorsement in the role by the Local Authority, can attend and vote in the absence of the representative.
- ii) Only named deputies may attend or vote in place of a member.

8. PROCEDURE FOR ELECTING CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

These officers shall be elected by the individual members of SACRE. A representative of the Local Authority shall serve as the returning officer for the election. The returning officer shall invite nominations to each post. Members of SACRE may nominate themselves or accept the nomination of others. All members of SACRE shall be informed in writing of the nominations ahead of the SACRE meeting at which the election is to be held. Members unable to attend may send a postal vote to the returning officer. The election, at the SACRE meeting, shall be by secret ballot of members using the single transferable vote method of election¹ with the winner becoming chair and the runner-up becoming vice-chair, subject to the following paragraph.

The result of the election shall be ratified by the four groups in accordance with the statutory requirement described in 9(1) below. In the event of the four groups failing to ratify the successful candidates, then the runner-up in the election shall be put to the groups for ratification as chair and the candidate who comes third shall be put to the groups as vice-chair. In the event of neither winner nor runner-up in the election being acceptable to all four groups then the election shall be re-run and the process repeated until a chairman acceptable to the four groups is appointed. The vice-chair shall be similarly appointed.

Any matter related to the election of chair and vice-chair not provided for in this constitution shall be decided by the returning officer.

9.

- 1) On any question to be decided by the SACRE only the representative groups on the SACRE shall be entitled to vote, and each group shall have a single vote. Decisions made within each group require a majority vote. Matters to be decided by SACRE are decided by a majority vote of the groups that make up the SACRE subject to the single exception of a vote concerning a review of the current agreed syllabus (see next paragraph).

¹ This provides that a candidate receiving more than 50% of votes cast is elected. If no candidate receives the required support, voters second preference votes are taken into account and so on until a candidate has over 50% of the votes cast.

- 2) Each representative group has a single vote on the question of whether to require a review of the Local Authority's agreed syllabus except the Local Authority group.

10. CO-OPTIONS

The SACRE may co-opt members on the nomination of any of the groups. Such co-opted members may participate fully in the discussions of the SACRE but may not vote.

11. QUORUM

A meeting of SACRE shall be deemed quorate if at least one member of each of the groups represented is present

12. FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The SACRE shall normally meet at least once in every school term. The four groups may meet separately beforehand if they wish.

13. NOTICE OF MEETINGS

At least 7 clear days before each meeting of the SACRE the clerk shall send notices to every member setting out the business to be transacted. Items for the agenda may be submitted by any of the four groups and such items should be sent to the Clerk not less than 14 days before a meeting.

14. MEETINGS OF FOUR GROUPS

Each of the committees of the SACRE may hold its own meetings and shall make its own arrangements to appoint a Chairman and Vice-Chairman

15. SUB-COMMITTEES

The SACRE may constitute sub-committees to deal with particular matters as and when it sees fit. Seven clear days notice of meetings of any such sub-committees should be given to the members thereof. Sub-committees cannot make decisions binding on SACRE.

16. MINUTES

Minutes of each meeting shall be sent by the clerk to each member as soon as practicable after a meeting. The minutes shall be confirmed at the next meeting.

17. CIRCULATION OF MINUTES

The Clerk shall publish on the SACRE website minutes of SACRE meetings and provide to any persons as may be deemed appropriate by the clerk, or SACRE.

18. AVAILABILITY OF PAPERS TO THE PUBLIC

- 1) All papers of the SACRE shall be available to the public, except in relation to any information defined as confidential in regulation 9 of the Religious Education (Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils) Regulations 1994.
- 2) All meetings of the SACRE and of any sub-committee of the SACRE, including the four groups which constitute the SACRE, shall be open to the public, except that the public may be excluded from any meeting during an item of business whenever it is likely that, if members of the public were present, confidential information as defined in regulation 9 of the Religious Education (Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils) Regulations 1994 would be disclosed.

Determinations Granted by Westminster SACRE

Schools can apply for a determination if they feel that, for religious reasons, collective worship which reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief is not appropriate for their pupils.

Westminster SACRE considers each application received against the criteria set out in the 1996 Education Act and Circular 1/94 (or any updates to this legislation and guidance should they become available).

Determinations lapse after five years, when schools can apply for the determination to be renewed. The same criteria would apply when considering the renewal application.

The Department for Education is responsible for granting determinations for Academies.

Current Determinations:

School	Date Determination Granted
Queen's Park Primary	February 2014
Hallfield Primary	March 2013
George Eliot Primary	February 2014

Previous Determinations of school that are now Academies:

School	Date Determination Granted
Gateway Primary (now Gateway Academy)	November 2009
Quintin Kynaston (now Quintin Kynaston Academy)	November 2009